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ABSTRACT

Educational policy in West Germany determines the goals and functions of the nation's educational system and focuses the system to meet society's demands. The educational system includes the public schools, vocational training, continuing education, and the universities and aims to prepare people for responsible citizenship. West Germany's reform and modernization have been important and education is vital to these processes. From 1950 to mid-1960 was a period of non-reform and this was reflected in the country's education policy. The late-1960s to the mid-1970s began a reform era in which there were changes in curricula, the public schools, and higher education. The reform movement then subsided due to financial and social problems. The Minister of Education and Science holds major responsibility for the funding and values in West Germany's educational institutions. For some time West German economic growth and modernization have been dependent on skilled manpower with a knowledge of new technologies. Education is viewed as an investment toward this end and present education policies link education to industry and prosperity and promote vocational training and scientific and technological education. Meanwhile, the structures that cause and increase social inequality persist. Currently major societal changes are taking place and it is important that all members of society have influence on social development, but current policy makers seem not to be open to dialogue. Education continues to reflect society's segmentation. (AS)

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TRENDS OF THE CURRENT WEST GERMAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

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PREFACE

This paper tries to show the current development of educational policy in its effects on the educational system of West Germany, not in an empirical way, but by some exaggerated theses. It seems impossible to describe and explain the German educational system in its entity, considering history and the changes caused by political influences. The paper argues from a normative point of view that the concept of education in its emergence has a wide meaning and emphasizes the relevance of personal development and self-determination. There exist some indications that the educational system is mainly considered with regard to social utility and with the consequence of reducing the concept of education by political interests. The paper intends to elucidate those theses.

I. EDUCATION POLICY UNDER SOCIAL DEMAND FUNCTIONS

Education policy is a significant part of societal policy. It determines the functions and goals of the educational system. A country's educational system is influenced in its structure and nature by history, politics and the characteristics of the country by its socio-cultural phenomenons. The educational system of West Germany includes the public school system (HEARNDEN 1976), vocational training (SCHOENFELDT 1986), continued education (WEINBERG 1981) and universities (HUEFNER/RAU 1987). Decision-making and the dimension of competence are differently distributed to the administrations of the Laender and the Federal Government, in this case, the Ministry of Education and Science. Education in the Federal Republic is in the responsibility of the individual Laender, which retain cultural autonomy (Kulturhoheit) and, therefore, if schools are considered as subordinate elements of the hierarchical system of public administration, any substantial change is not an educational affair which may be left to educationists, but a political one. Due to the cultural autonomy of the Laender with their different types of government, and the sharing of competences between the Laender and the Federal Government we

cannot presuppose a consistent educational policy. But within the dominant values on the future purpose, role and meaning of education in a context of structural change in economy and society, a common basis of administrators and policy-makers is visible. The importance of education depended on the belief that it can influence the character and conduct of individuals, and thus the nature of the social pattern. Therefore, the educational system is linked with policy due to educational institutions aiming to prepare the youth for their societal and political life. In the context of these functions we have to ask for the content of such education: is it meant as an introduction to the most important forms of knowledge, or as a preparation and training in the skills, required in future occupations, or has it something to do with encouraging internal personal capacities to be developed? This issue reflects the dimension of decision-making of educational policy, and raises the question of the control mechanism of content and direction of education as to social expectations linked with and the determination interests of the social development. Significantly, education policy has a regulating function, suiting the educational system to social demands. The paper tries to describe the governing ideas in education policy, as to the difficulty meeting the needs and goals of society in its existing social structure, undergoing structural changes according to the needs of individuals. The key issues, here, show, which aspects of culture are selected as being worthwile, and who does the selection.

II. TRANSITION FROM 'NON-REFORM' TO REFORMS

Characterizing education as a keystone of reform and modernization of the Federal Republic, different approaches to differentiating periods and decades in education policy are evaluated (KANZ 1987). Mainly, till the end of the 60s two decades of 'non-reform' in the public school system have to be observed. The following reform-era until the mid of the 70s, accompanied by curriculum reforms, stronger approval of comprehensive schools and the expansion of secondary and higher

education was cut off by financial shortage and a transition within politics, realizing different urgent social demands and goals. After this period, a roll back of reforms and a stop in education policy has to be complained about.

Setting up an educational commission by the Parliament of the Federal Republic might appear as a change. The task to evaluate the future challenge in its meaning for the educational system, and to render a first report in 1988, was given. The assignment of the commission reflects that the public system of education is a concern of the nation. Which effects enduced this phenomenon? Presently and compared with the transition from 'non-reform' to reforms in the public school system, the significance and relevance of education for economic needs are discussed. This belief in the pre-eminent value of national welfare by a production of manpower as the main task of the educational system, defines and shapes the functions of education.

The view that education would have important consequences for the economy was articulated at the beginning of the 60s. The expansion of secondary and higher education was seen as a precondition for economic growth and modernization because it would provide manpower with the relevant skills and knowledge to manage and elaborate new technology. Education was conceived as an important form of investment. It seems peculiar that the expansion of education was accompanied by the assumption of education as a civil right (DAHRENDORF). This can be explained by the beginning criticism which intends the improvement of knowledge with respect to social needs, fighting against traditional and conservative structures. In consequence, equality of chances and social justice to the deprived were demanded.

III. THE RESOURCE OF THE GOVERNING IDEAS IN EDUCATION POLICY

The future governing ideas, dominating the educational debate are based on a very narrow range of resources. The West German Minister of Education and Science, J. Moellemann, shapes

and determines the ideological context in which educational institutions operate. He has a key position not only in funding priorities, but projecting the values imploring economic success. A new kind of governmental utilitarism is seeking more vocational degrees and potential scientists and technologists. With reference to interventions, the role of central government implementing educational policy can be asked for. The aspect of 'vocationalisation' is related to the specific competence and limited powers of the Minister on one side. He is responsible for vocational training and vocational continuing education. But on the other side the governmental approach to vocational training is important in the context of the relationship between education and training and national prosperity. It raises issues fundamental to the relationship between education and society. These policies concerned with linking education to industry need to be understood in relation to the form and persistence of wider social unequalities, referring to certain contradictions between preconditions providing education and the demand on priority of social utility, and the service function of education.

This can be revealed in 4 educational fields: (1) Vocational training concerning school leavers; (2) continuing education; (3) studies and (4) school curricula.

(1) The Minister stresses the role of education, preparing young people for a lifelong work. Especially in the context of a common European Market in 1992 and its effects, he emphasizes the relevance of vocational preparation. But the problem of youth unemployment which cannot be solved by training has not dominated educational policy initiatives. Only a few programmes are existing, designed for those staying on at school after the school leaving age and without job and contract, or without having completed secondary modern school, and who are pursuing neither a specific vocational course nor further studies. Such programmes with the official aim to extend access to those being disaffected from conventional schooling are specifically geared to socialize those by a general preparation for work affecting their attitu-

des. Didactic approaches to enhance social equality of opportunity by education are rare and difficult to run without changing preconditions and structures of school and learning processes.

The belief is that the problem of youth unemployment will be solved by a decrease in the birthrate and an increasing demand for young trainees by prospective employers.

(2) The quartanary sector of the educational system, continuing education, is very complex in its structure of private and public educational institutions. Some attempts can be observed, spoiling the balance between public responsibility providing facilities for adult learning as an integral part of the infrastructure of education, and the independence of the institutions. Currently, in spite of that all the adult education laws of the particular Laender preferably have the mission to support liberal adult education (i.e., everybody can attend courses in any field of personal interest), adult education is mainly conceived as an instrument to solve labour market problems and gain more relevance in this view. Because of the need of up-dating vocational knowledge undergoing economic and technological change, supply and demand of programmes in the fields of political education, leisure time activities and education for individual help are curtailed. Structures and preconditions of continuing education were influenced by the introduction of the principle of competition between public and private institutions, competing for a raising number of their participants due to an increasing necessity of self-financing of the public institutions (HUFER 1988). While the social effects of a two-thirds majority of job-possessing people against the jobless within the society are discussed, vocational perfection and training gain more and more priority.

(3) The development of society brought forward an increasing number of occupations, where scientific knowledge and the application of its methods are necessary to meet job requirements adequately. This development depends on the expansion of the universities as an inevitable precondition of modernization. In West Germany, we do presently have 20-25 per cent of an age group studying at the universities, and the trend points upward. The past expansion in terms of student enrolments confronted universities with new problems, because - in so far as predominantly technological sciences and pure research are provided, and social studies not very well funded - excellence in research and teaching deteriorate.

The question arises whether the university system serves as a parking lot for young people who otherwise would be unemployed? And how can the universities react until the expected decrease of enrolment by the end of the century?

Denoting performance in higher education, HUEFNER and RAU observe that many concepts, originally related to the field of economics, entered the discussion on alternative higher education policies. But changing the framework of conditions in favour of a functioning competition of universities by more transparency, thus indicating the intention to increase quality of research as well as efficiency of resource utilization, major policy changes cannot be expected in the very near future. The Minister of Education and Science stimulates the debate as to performance indicators with the demand for limitations of the length of courses, to rule out disadvantages for German students with regard to the European common market with its consequence of a new kind of social mobility.

(4) Although several attempts failed to introduce new subjects into school curricula, the topic of new technologies and computer literacy has been introduced into lower and higher secondary school curricula (pupils from 13 up).

Curriculum development is a very unmanageable affair and influenced by tradition and the tripartite secondary system in West Germany with its function to regulate the access to higher education. Some of the educational goals of the non-implemented subjects, for instance ecological and environmental education, peace education, the principles of law and order and the constitution, the German Grundgesetz, should be fulfilled by political education with an integrative method. But the contribution and the dimension of civics is already curtailed in schools, therefore civics cannot ensure their multipurposes. In consequence of the view that micro-computers have become a sign of the times, computer literacy seems to be conceived as a compulsary course of general technological instruction. Actually, it is a kind of vocational training, implemented in the 'secret garden' of the curriculum, because computer literacy particularly applies to instruction in computer manipulation. Despite that, the diffusion of new technologies into working life, and its effects on the demand for labour is highly overestimated (ALEX 1987), schools looked, how computers could be integrated into existing curricula and organizational structures. The policy of adaptation assumes that computers would conform to the classic criteria, implicit in the construction and transmission of the traditional school curriculum. The school curriculum has traditionally provided - apart from different issues - the epistemological and evaluative basis for what is called 'valid knowledge'. A continually developed hardware, in the beginning sponsored by the micro-computer industry, and a varied quality of the available software, find their way into schools. The concentration of resources on computers encourages to overlook the implications of a rapid technological development and overlooks to evaluate the nature and purpose of school.

There is a danger that technology will be uncritically implemented, because equal innovation strategy seems to be absent.

Innovations in schools are usually embedded in a lot of rhetoric. In this case of modelling curricula to suit modern conditions, it has been argued that preparation for a working life is one of the most important principal functions of school. The rigorous pursuit of one function may impede the accomplishment of others. The priority and close relation directly to the economic needs can assume that an economic preoccupation is dominating, which diverts schools from the task of meeting the personal development needs of each person. Even if schools cannot remain untouched by technological development, the introduction of new technology necessitates a careful evaluation of the results for pedagogy, methodology and structures.

IV. FINAL REMARKS ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF CONTROLLING THE TECHNOLOGICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY INFLUENCED SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

As has been pointed out, the changed structures of the educational institutions and the contents of education have consequences for the socialization of youth and adults. They are forced to accept vocational training and the up-dating of vocational knowledge as their 'life-assurance' in a more and more unsteady world. A lot of uncertainty will come into their lives, because the 'learning society', which is in demand of undergoing economic and technological changes, means that retraining of people increases as much as the uncertainty of job perspectives. Some of them will try to gain qualification, others will be deterred by further social constraints and will become hardship-cases.

The stress of qualification and of the problems of an industrialized country without any raw material, other than 'human capital' - so it has been emphasized by the Minister of Education and Science - reflects that education often acts as a medium to claim national destiny. It seems to be a particularly appropriate vehicle for discussing the future of society in ge-

neral, but it is a monologue. The goals of education - equal opportunities and social justice in the 1960s as well as vocational preparation and a lifelong learning for up-dating vocational knowledge in the 1980s - have in contrary reflected and helped to reproduce the dominant belief and expectations of the society of its time. The context of education is being transformed by increasingly rapid social and economic change. The political action consists in stabilizing the disposition, i.e., the structures which cause and increase social unequality are untouched and persisting. Unequality is justified as a prerequisite for social dynamics. The national purpose hidden behind that justification is not revealed, but decidedly it may be articulated: to withstand and survive in the world-market. And to make an oversubtle assertion, one could say that leadership within a tough competition is claimed. The consequence is that the gap between the leading industrialized nations and those being at disadvantage will be widened. That is the uncomfortable issue, and an aspect of internationalization and interdependence. At the same time, we find a process of adaptation, and of segmentation and increasing social unequality as the effect of dependence (KAELBLE 1987).

Some authors pointed out that the aspect of 'vocationalisation' in education in the assumption to be an instrument reducing unemployment and economic decline can be found in France (TANGUY 1987) and England (YOUNG 1987) in a similar way. The competition and rivalry regarding leadership by technology intensifies more social problems than are solved. All sectors of society are reviewed as to which of them are suitable and useful with regard to the challenge. To a certain extent this means a conversion of the society. In this context, instrumentalist theories will focus on the value of conformity between educational provision and the supposed needs of the particular society.

The economic decline, increasing competition, structural unemployment, societal consequences due to crisis of social welfare, environmental issues and vital problems of individuals, raise fundamental questions about the nature of modernization and, significantly, the role of citizens. What have those re-

sponsible persons done in order to make all members of society understand the social development, i.e., have influence on it?

A democratic society will need to choose whether cohesion and authority in the policy derive from imposed control, or the direction and development of social change are negotiated. At the present time, it seems that objections are not welcome and that a rational dialogue and communication in a time of major structural change is impeded.

You could ask, why isn't there any resistance against that? Torsten HUSÉN notes that 'there are no universal paradigms for the conduct of educational reforms' (1986: 53). But he assumed a conjecture implementing a strategy of reform by consciousness and consent. But today, we find, hidden in a secret garden of curriculum, or as an effect of influenced educational structures, and within the context, a kind of hidden reforms. The consequences of this seem difficult to be evaluated.

The administrators act as indicating they would follow the advice of HUSÉN, that 'changes in the educational system have to occur gradually and slowly, in case they are not associated with what is virtually a political and/or social revolution' (55).

Education reflects the society in which it is embedded. Consequently, in a political and culturally partitioned society this segmentation reflects itself in its education. The concept of education is reduced to the opinion of what education contributes to the growth of a technologically developed nation. People are only subordinate factors and not provided with sovereign power, because there is lack of transparency. One ought to look at the social and political forces behind a reform, how they emerge and how they act, HUSÉN said.

The slogan of equal opportunities and of educational reforms as an equalizer of opportunities disappeared, and the need of adaptation and general capacities in flexibility are required. There is a widening gap between individual expectations and social demands.

I don't wonder, why political education as a possible adversary is not supported. And the challenge which is placed in the way of political education is the challenge for the polity of the 1990s.

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